(d) whether this requires change of bilateral agreement that exists between the two countries governing air services; and

(e) if so, by when an agreement on open sky pact is likely to be signed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (e) US authorities have proposed signing of an open sky agreement with India. US Asstt. Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs recently called on Minister (Civil Aviation) in this regard. However, no decision has yet been taken on the proposal. Even under the existing Air Services Agreement between the two countries, which is a quasi open sky (Bermuda-I) type, each side can designate any number of airlines to operate any number of services on agreed routes.

Expansion of Mysore airport

2096. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state the present status of the proposed expansion/renovation of the existing Mysore Airport Project in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): Airports Authority of India (AAI) has initiated action for development of runway of dimension 1700 x 150 metres alongwith associated infrastructure to sustain the operation of ATR-42 type of aircraft subject to the condition that the State Government of Karnataka provides the required land free of cost and free from all encumberances, free electricity and water, free security for the aerodrome for peripheral security as well as the anti-hijacking squad and exempts the aerodrome from property tax and municipality tax. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been sent to State Government for acceptance in November 2003. Further action is likely to be taken after getting the State Government's response.

Expansion of low-cost airlines

2097. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent expansion of low-cost airlines offering cheaper travel that is affordable for Indian public;

(b) whether Government have any plans to promote the industry by way of policies and incentives in the light of the above;

(c) if so, the details of such plans;

(d) whether there are additional plans to upgrade or construct new airports at major cities across India for the low-cost airlines -.0 offer their services; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. One scheduled domestic airline has commenced low cost operations.

(b) to (e) Presently, there is no separate policy or incentives for low cost airlines including that for construction of airports. The present thrust is on improving regional connectivity and making air travel affordable. Government is formulating a national policy on civil aviation in which these issues will be suitably addressed.

Direct IA flights between Delhi and Hyderabad

2098. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to introduce more IA direct flights from Hyderabad to Delhi and other metropolitican cities keeping in view the demands of the people of Hyderabad;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, whether Government would consider introducing more flights from Hyderabad to Delhi and other important metropolitan cities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Subject to availability of aircraft capacity, Indian Airlines has plans to increase frequency on Hyderabad/Delhi route in the forthcoming Winter Schedule, commencing 30th October, 2004. However, there are no plans to increase flights between Hyderabad and other metropolitan cities.

(c) Subject to Route Dispersal Guidelines, Airlines are free to select the sectors they wish to operate. Air Deccan has proposed to start following direct air services from Hyderabad to metropolitan cities with